

Address by Rumanian Foreign Minister Mircea Geoana to the Yearly Meeting of the Board of Governors of Radio Free Europe (Prague, 18 July 2002)

I am particularly pleased to be back in Prague again and especially at Radio Free Europe. I enjoyed my last visit here so much that I wanted to come back. I feel particularly honoured that you have invited me to speak at your Annual Board meeting.

Only 4 months remain now to the Prague NATO Summit. Our meeting this afternoon presents a good opportunity to take stock of changes in the European security landscape. What will Europe look like after November? What will be our concerns? And how will we deal with them?

The Landmark Summit

Prague will be a landmark summit. First, because through the decision on enlargement, it will ensure what Lord Robertson has called the “democratic unification of Europe”. And second, because through decisions on new capabilities and new missions, it will reconfirm NATO’s role as the premier defence alliance to guarantee future Euro-Atlantic security.

It is especially fitting that President Havel will host. After all, he was one of the outstanding leaders of the generation that resisted the grip of totalitarianism and set Central and Eastern Europe on the path to freedom rediscovered and democracy reborn. He can take pride that the dreams he shared with the other heroes of that era are close to fulfilment.

Romania’s case for inclusion in the robust and geographically balanced enlargement now expected in November is a strong one. That we have consolidated our democratic values is undisputed. It is widely recognised that we have made enormous progress in the past 18 months with our economic reform process and military restructuring programme. And more than that, we have proven our worth as a valuable ally on the southern flank not only through our contribution to peacekeeping efforts in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan but by the deployment of experienced mountain troops to Operation Enduring Freedom.

Even so, we know there is no room for complacency. In addition to the conventional Membership Action Plan, we have drawn up a solid programme of measures to tackle corruption, speed up privatisation and strengthen border security. These issues are brought together in an Agenda for Reform designed to address sensitive issues such as anticorruption measures, freedom of press, minority issues – in particular the Jewish question, steps to achieve a functioning market economy and addressing the question of residual influence within our system of the former Securitate.

We will continue the reform process as long as it takes, up to our actual admission into NATO and beyond. We have already started drawing up our objectives for our 4th Membership Action Plan next year, regardless of the decision in November. Why? Because we believe, to use President Havel’s own words, that “the European post-communist countries truly belong to the West – geographically, historically, culturally as well as in terms of their values”. And because our true ambition is to join NATO not as a passive recipient of security but as an active and valued contributor. This is what lies behind our objective to transform our armed forces into a fully professional and modern

military, and why we have sought expertise, training and advice from the most professional armies in the Western world.

What is more, we are supported in our efforts by an impressively high percentage – 80% – of our public. Because they want to erase the painful memories of the past, the loss of life and dignity through two World Wars and Communist gulags, a time when Romania did not control its own destiny but was at the mercy of others. Because they are determined to take their rightful place among the democratic and free community of European nations. And because they want to see their military, already one of the most respected institutions in our society, appreciated by others as well for their professionalism and courage.

A New Security Agenda

Prague will not only be a turning point for Romania and the other candidate countries. It will set the security agenda for the foreseeable future. September 11th brought home dramatically the message that new capabilities and new partnerships are essential if the new dangers to global security are to be defeated.

Romania wants to see NATO invigorated, with an increased political role certainly, but, more importantly, with greater predictability and enhanced operational robustness. It is in our interest to keep the US directly engaged in European security. There are some who have questioned the relevance of NATO today, who argue that the Alliance is evolving into primarily a political organisation.

We have no interest in seeing NATO develop along that track. Other organisations, like the OSCE, fulfil that role. NATO must remain an effective military organisation, centred around Article V, equipped to tackle the new threats of terrorism and organised crime. We intend to play our part in meeting that aim, through the development of niche capabilities that will be of use to the Alliance as a whole.

And it is in our interest that NATO should develop its new strategic relationship with Russia through the NATO/Russia Council. It is right that Russia has been invited to have an important say in certain areas of European security. By the same token, it is appropriate that the NRC should also examine security issues of common interest and concern such as the frozen conflicts in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, or developments in Central Asia.

After the war against terror started in Afghanistan, the Black Sea gained a new strategic importance for NATO and the Euro-Atlantic partnership. Bringing NATO to the Black Sea can provide the Alliance with permanent forward bases for air, land, and maritime traffic thus exporting security and stability in its neighbourhood and beyond.

Nor must we ignore the benefits of a healthy relationship with Ukraine. Romania can represent a European anchor for this key ex-Soviet state and can help the Alliance to be better placed in enhancing its partnership with Ukraine. We believe it is important to keep Ukraine anchored to Euro-Atlantic values, offering a balance between cooperation with this country and avoiding raising premature hopes as to possible NATO membership.

From Copenhagen to Copenhagen

In Romania, we look at the processes of NATO and EU integration as mutually reinforcing. We have been encouraged by the focus in the Danish Presidency's Programme on enlargement, justice and home affairs, and global responsibilities. These priorities accord very much with our own.

For Romania, our aim, according to our self-imposed calendar, is to open negotiations on all the chapters of the *acquis* by the end of the Danish presidency and to close them at the latest in the first months of 2004. What we would like to see from the Copenhagen Council is the adoption of a clear road map for Romania and a specific target date for its accession to the EU.

This would allow us to sign the Accession Treaty before the elections for the European Parliament. This should give sufficient grounds for Romania to send representatives to the new EP, in the first phase as observers, and to be present at other important moments for the future of EU, such as the IGC, on an equal footing with the other candidate countries.

The debate on the future of the European construction is already some months old. We have not firmed up our position on all the issues under discussion within the European Convention. But we are pretty clear on the principles that should govern our final decisions.

First, we want to see a flexible catalogue of competences, which means not tying ourselves now to firm decisions on which institution within the EU does what. Clarification and division of competences between Member States and the Commission and between different bodies is even more necessary in the context of enlargement. So we need to keep flexibility while making the decision-making process more efficient.

Second, we want to safeguard the democratic principle. Democracy within the EU is a combination between civic democracy and international democracy. This ensures a balance between representing European citizens and representing European states. This balance is of course not perfect, and even though the present system in the Union is the most democratic to date, the Convention will have to look for ways to dramatically improve it. We in Romania are fully committed to a close dialogue between partners: civil society and governmental and parliamentary bodies; all national expertise, experience and knowledge is valuable in such a comprehensive endeavour.

Thirdly, we want genuine transparency. As the Union becomes more complex and globalisation spreads, society needs better access to decision-making. The quality of European governance depends mainly on its level of transparency. European citizens need to understand how their institutions do work.

Transparency, efficiency and coherence – these are what not only the current EU citizens, but the future ones expect from the Union.

This brings me to the institutional question. Romania envisages an EU as a federation of Nation-States. We support the consolidation of the Community dimension, by reinforcing the European institutions directly responsible for the implementation of Community policies, mainly the European Commission.

The European Council should return to its role of “supreme instance” within the Community decision-making process and cease acting as just a “mediator” among different horizontal Councils. We are also in favour of strengthening the parliamentary component of the European institutional system to remedy the democratic deficit present today. This is the surest way to guarantee the Union’s legitimacy as an association not only of states, but of peoples and citizens.

The cost and means of financing enlargement have been hotly debated in recent months, in particular the Commission proposal on direct income support payments to farmers from those candidate countries, like the Czech Republic, that are expected to join in 2004. The most recent proposals of the Agriculture Commissioner Franz Fischler are worth serious consideration and we are studying them carefully in Bucharest. But one of the key elements we want Member States and the Commission to remember is that the new financial perspective must take into account a future Union with 27 members, even if only 10 countries join in 2004.

The academic Timothy Garton Ash, well-known to you in Prague, has argued recently for greater solidarity from Europeans with Europeans, in the financial area as well, with an eye to our common long term future. Which means that no landmark in financial terms should interfere between the current and the future Member States. Nor should cost be used as an excuse to postpone to some indefinite date accession for those countries that will not join in 2004.

Securing Our Borders

Romano Prodi said at the Seville Summit that illegal immigration “is a big and burning issue”. We are all aware of the official estimates that half a million immigrants enter the EU illegally every year. And we are well aware of the impact that this phenomenon has had on the domestic political scene in Western Europe.

For Romania, the task of ensuring efficient border control and surveillance of our eastern border is a top priority and an important challenge. After all, we will have one of the longest external borders of the enlarged Union. We believe the need for better results calls for shared responsibilities. Strengthening the EU's external borders is a common task for all EU Member States, present and future.

The measures already adopted by the candidate countries to strengthen border management have yielded positive results in curbing illegal immigration, organised crime and drug trafficking. The joint activities underway through the accession process show how effective it can be to involve candidate countries in the policies of the European Union as they develop. In this way, candidates can demonstrate their ability to take on the obligations they will assume upon accession. Countries, like Romania, that are members of the Regional SECI anti-crime Centre in Bucharest, have already produced concrete results through regional cooperation in terms of tracking and arresting organised crime figures and targeting human trafficking networks.

The Seville Summit Decisions were a welcome advance on the way to a common border management policy in Europe. But I would like to see us Europeans set our sights a little higher. Let's be more ambitious. EU Member States and Candidates alike should be aiming to harmonise implementation of legislation, adopt common procedures in the field

of asylum, including in the long-term a European data-bank for visas, and, why not, a common system of surveillance of the future EU external frontiers.

Romania is a strong advocate of the proposed common EU border police. This could be a valuable instrument in implementing a common immigration policy. And even more so if it were to include from the outset border police personnel from the candidate countries. The main features of such a force could be similar to the European Rapid Reaction Force, to which the candidates have already pledged contributions. One way to avoid pressure on the common budget could be to redeploy national units from what will become internal borders after enlargement towards the new eastern borders.

The EU's future immigration policy must be effective but should remain flexible. More security should not lead to less freedom. The fight against illegal immigration must not hamper the freedom of movement of persons and workers in the future EU, especially between East and West. The Romanian Government is therefore exploring with other governments the idea of a conference this autumn on a European Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, bringing together all 13 EU candidate countries. Our objective would be to share best practice and try to develop some common procedures that would promote integration in a very practical way. We see this as candidates getting together, not, as at other times, to make demands of the Union, but to offer something substantive.

Strengthened Solidarity in Europe

The European Union is the best example of multilateralism that the world has at its disposal. The lessons learnt from the turmoil that affected South-Eastern Europe, and the European Union's decision to assume the leading role in tackling outstanding issues in Bosnia and in Macedonia prove that there is a need for a firm EU security policy with strong links to NATO. Romania intends to continue to participate actively in shaping this policy. As a sizeable European nation, strategically placed on the Western shores of the Black Sea, Romania can play a significant role in spreading the most profound European values in our still troubled neighbourhood.

The EU's initiative towards the new eastern neighbours (Ukraine, Republic of Moldova and Belarus) is one we strongly support. We have already proposed that Georgia, our neighbour across the Black Sea, should be included too. It is vital that the enlargement process should create no new dividing lines. We have seen enough division within our continent. We have experienced the pain of being on the wrong side of the divide. We do not want to see others abandoned or neglected for the next 50 years.

Romania has a moral, historical and strategic responsibility to ensure that the gates to integration remain open and that our neighbours should be eligible to share our common European destiny when they are ready. It is in Romania's direct interest that the EU and NATO should continue to hold out the hand of friendship and the perspective of hope for a closer relationship and more prosperous future to those across the Black Sea who still have far to travel along their road of transition. As our closest neighbour, the future prosperity and security of the Republic of Moldova are of special interest to us. The citizens of that country, with which we share so much history and culture, have the same right as ours to share in the benefits of belonging to the European House. The gas- and oil-rich Caspian region will be Europe's principal source of energy in the future. It deserves attention now. Inadequate engagement by the Euro-Atlantic community in areas where

democracy is weak or non-existent, and where social and economic polarisation is rampant, will only lead in the long run to more costly intervention later, as we have seen all too tragically in the Balkans and in Afghanistan. We could start by working up a Partnership for Modernity for Central Asia focussed on promoting economic development, building up democratic institutions and civil society, and encouraging social equality and ethnic tolerance.

And by Euro-Atlantic engagement, I mean the EU and NATO and the US and organisations like the OSCE. The more that the international community can work together, the greater the chances of our success. The development of a strong European Security and Defence Policy, anchored in but not competing with NATO, and rapid agreement on clear arrangements for operational complementarity will be instrumental in the drive of NATO and the EU to take a more dynamic global role.

The European Union is the natural and indispensable partner of the United States. There are some who think the partnership is unbalanced. Europe does indeed need to spend more on defence, as many commentators have argued, but not necessarily in the same way as the US. Europe should stop competing exclusively according the American definition of “world superpower”. It is a power on the global stage in its own right – influencing world politics through what it does best: promoting the development of market economies and trade liberalisation; supporting the growth of civil society and democracy-building; conflict prevention and crisis management.

Many leaders and decision-makers in the United States recognise that the Europeans contribute in building soft security, for example by carrying much of the financial burden for assistance and know-how to the transition economies and the developing world. Yet there remains a reluctance to open lucrative US defence markets to European corporations or to allow European NATO Allies to benefit from the fruits of their generously-funded Research and Development establishments.

By sharing the burden of global responsibilities, the US and Europe could be the most effective and powerful partnership in the world. We should use that partnership to tackle what remains one of the most complex and unresolved global challenges: poverty and underdevelopment. The social and economic gap between rich and poor is as great as ever. But together we can civilise globalisation and make it work to the benefit of the disadvantaged as well as the wealthy. Together, and only together, we can search for a modern approach, adapting the global financial architecture, including Bretton Woods, to the new realities. Surely by pooling the talent and the ideas of the young elites in politics, business, or civil society on both sides of the Atlantic, it should be possible to find a way to banish poverty from the planet.

Conclusion

Romania belongs without doubt to the West and fully shares its democratic principles. We have no intention of being a free rider in NATO. Our race to Prague in November is a sprint not to the finishing post but to the starting line. We will maintain high standards not only because of the ratification process but because we feel morally and politically bound by our obligations. Romania can and will bring added value to NATO in geo-political, military and social terms.

Nor as future members of the European Union do we intend to huddle passively under the warm EU blanket. Not only will we continue to play a significant regional role as a factor of stability in South-East Europe and east of the Black Sea, but we will also act as a player in the global team wherever needed.

Our destiny to belong to a free and united Europe was denied to us for years. We have a historic opportunity now for our people to achieve their dreams, nations to actively join in the enterprise of designing the blueprint for tomorrow's Europe. We are determined not to miss our chance, however challenging the road. Our place is alongside the rest of democratic Europe. We will do whatever it takes to get there and stay there.

[Quelle: <http://domino.kappa.ro/mae/presa.nsf/8ea33b4c1e32ccf9c22566db000901f9/de56736b0ef90b55c2256bfb002e9b66>]